A

SERMON

Occasion'd by the

Late Dreadful STORM.

Preach'd

On Wednesday the 19th of January 1703.

Being the Day appointed by Her Majelties Proclamation for a General Falt.

By RICHARD STEPHENS,
Rector of Stock-Gallard in Dorfetsbire.

LONDON,

Printed for Thomas Speed, over against Jonathan's Coffee-House in Exchange-Alley, in Cornhill. 1704.

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PSALM CXVIII. 23.

This is the Lords doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.

WAS a Scene full of Surprize and Wonder, for the Son of God to become Incarnate for the Sins and Miscarriages of Human Race; the Builders which rejected that precious Stone, little thought he would become, at last, the Head Stone in the Corner; the designs of Providence were laid too deep to be perceived by Mortals at first View; the Almighty chose to alarm and amuse the World by Wonders and Mi-

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racles, and by a continual Train of Mercies and Providences he makes his Power and Glory still known among Men; for when Famine or Pestilence, or any other Terrible Vengeance shall pursue the World; when the Sword or Fire shall extend their Triumplant Arms, and the Earth be sprinkled with Blood and Ashes; when the sluggish Ocean shall be animated with Heat and Fury, and be forced beyond its Bounds, by such a terrible and raging Tempest as shakes the Foundations of the Universe, and makes Nature it self. Groan and Tremble: We have great reason to be surprized with Wonder and Amazement, and to Proclaim with the Royal Psalmist, This is the Lords doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. From the Words Ishall observe Five things.

- I. I shall shew how we are to understand this expression of the Psalmist, This is the Lords, doing.
- II. How we may discern and know when a thing is the Lords doing.
- which did lately shake and afflict the World, were the Lords doing; taken in the most
- ments do justly Challenge our Wonder and Admiration, for, it was marvellous in our eyes.

- V. That such a Terrible and Astonishing Vengeance doth loudly call for our Amendment and Reformation.
- 1. This is the Lords doing, may be taken in a large and general acceptation, and then whatfoever is done in the World may be faid to be the Lords doing; for God is the Author of our Life and Existence, and by a general Concurrence of his Providence co-operates with all his Creatures, for in him we Live, Move and have our Being. He has fixt the Springs and Principles of Motion in all Natural Agents, and their powers and efficacy flow from him; those kind and benigne influences by which the Sun warms us by day, and those more sharp and piercing Vapours by which the Frost Chills us by Night, receive their Power and Insluence from that Fountain of Perfection, which is the first mover of all Natural Causes.
- 2. This is the Lords doing, may be taken in a restrain'd and limited Sense, and may be Expounded to signific that God is immediately concern'd in the causing of such effects, that the Designs were laid by his Wisdom and Contrivance, and sulfilled accomplish by his more immediate concurrence and Operation. Such Events as these may be stilled the Lords doings, in the strictest and most proper sense; for God is the principal Cause in the producing of such Effects; and Natural Agents are the Instruments by which he doth bring about and

execute his Defigns; for though God has endow'd Natural Agents with natural virtues and powers, yet they are still under his Empire and Government; he can check and controul their natural motions, suspend and temper their influences, and make 'em produce effects, framp't with fuch visible marks and impressions, as shall declare 'em to be the Work and Power of some great invisible Being; and what those marks and impressions are, I come next to consider,

2ly. How we may difcern and know when a thing is the Lords doing.

1. When Natural Agents act in a strange and unufual manner, we must ascribe their motions and operations to the guidance and direction of some great invisible Power; for all Natural Agents would be as steady and regular as the Sun and Moon are in their Motions, had they not been under the Laws and Government of some higher Power: Their natural powers and virtues may fometimes, indeed, be interrupted and abated, by the force and pressure of contrary Agents; or they may be hastned in their motions by the speedy Accession of other Bodies: but when they shall loose their Native qualities and endowments on a fudden, or shall act even beyond their Natural powers and vertues; fuch strange unexpected Events must be appropriated to that Almighty Being, which doth rule and govern them at his pleasure. Those Wonders which Moses wrought

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wrought for the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, carried with them such visible tokens of a Supreme Power, as made the Egyptians themselves Believe and Tremble; and the Prophet Samuel alledges the strange and unusual operations of Natural Agents, to be a very sensible proof that Israel had offended the Lord Jehovah; Is it not Wheat Harvest to day, and I will pray unto the Lord, and he will send you Thunder and Rain, that ye may know, by those unusual Dispensations of Providence, that ye have provoked the Lord your God: And our Saviour expressly declar'd, that those Wonders which he wrought for the Conversion of Tree and Sidon, Chorazin and Bethsaida, would heighten their Insidelity, and leave no room for excuse.

2. When fuch strange and unusual operations of Natural Agents, shall carry very fignal Bleffings or Afflictions along with them, this is a manifest mark and token, that they are guided in their motions by fome Wise Invisible Mind: For to Bless or Afflict the World, is too full of Wisdom and deep Contrivance, to fall within the reach and compass of meer Natural Powers: 'Tis the work of a deep defigning Providence, to govern Natural Causes with fuch an Absolute sway and Empire, that their motions and tendencies shall bring Blessings or Afflictions upon the World. Those Seven Years of Plenty and Fulness, which filled Egypt with Food and Corn; and those Seven Years of Dearth and Famine, which brought want of Bread, and cleanness of Teeth in their

their Habitations, were the Visible work of a Wise over-ruling Providence, not the result of a Blind Accident or Chance. When a Kingdom is Visited with the more refreshing Rays and Blessings of Heaven; when Manna shall Drop down round their Tents, and they shall be encircled with Fulness and Abundance; or when a Nation shall be visited with Judgments, and an astonishing Vengeance: When the Floods shall lift up their Foaming Waves, or they shall feel the severe Lashes of a Terrible and Amazing Tempest, such a Kingdom or Nation may equally Proclaim with the Royal Psalmist, This is the Lords doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes; which leads me to shew

- 3. That those Terrible and Amazing Storms, which did lately shake and afflict the World were the Lords doings, taken in the strictest and most proper sense: For,
- I. Those Terrifying Gusts and Vapours did act in a strange and unusual manner, those Natural Agents did even exceed their Natural Virtues and Powers; and its not easy for us to imagine how they could be so restless and violent in their motions, had they not been Hurried on by the Divine Fury and Vengeance. We may allow the Philosophers to Travel into the deep Recesses of Nature, and search after Materials to compose such a frightful amazing Scene; but when they are Tired with their Search and Enquiries, they must have recourse

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at last to that Infinite Wildom, which has the fele guidance and direction of all Natural Canfes For whe ther they Trace the rife and original of fuch a for rious and raging Tempett, back into the Bowels of the Earth, or into the more Vaporous Boson of the Air, they must allow its Fuey and Vengeance to come from the Lord & for who can afcribe fuch ftrange and unufual Operations of Nature, to the casual and fortuitous motions of meer natural Agents? We have never before either feen or felt. neither do the Annals or Reports of our Fathers mention fuch a furious diffracting Storms and yet Natural Agents are always in motion, they are always exerting their operations and the most gross and fluggish of the Celestial Bodies do complear and fulfil their Courles, twice within the Circle of a Mans Age and therefore if frich Strange and Unit fual Events may be imputed to the motions and tendencies of meer Natural Agents, we might reafonably expect to meet with fuch an Amazing Tempeft at leaft once in every Thirty Years: But fuch Events are Strange and Sufprizing to us, they have not their flated dimes ms the Suri and Moon have for their return, but may come fooner or later, as Providence pleafeth, for God hath a hand in all the great Shakings and Convulsions of the World if the Winds blowand the Billows rage, tis to route and alarm Mortals, and Convince unbelieving Man what the Fate of Sinners will bed

II. The late Terrible Tempest was the Lords doing.

ing, in the most strict and proper Scale; for it cirried the fignal marks and expressions of Gods Fury and Vengeance along with it; twas a mighty Terror and Affliction to that part of the Nation through which it passed; the destroying Angel unsheathed his Sword, and proved almost as Fatal to us as to the Egyptians; for though there was not a Dead Body in every House, yet few escap't the amazing Stroaks of some remarkable Fury; the Melancholy Victims of a Terrible Vengeance were very numerous amongst us, the Land and the Ocean were Iaden with Spoils and Triumplas, and 'twill call for fome Millions, to make up our Private and Publick Losses, which at this Juncture must needs be a very Formidable Blow to the Kingdom. Had we lain folded in the Arms of Peace and Security, fuch a Wound might be quickly Heal'd, but when we are to Struggle with a Potent and Reffless Enemy, and must open our own Veins to give Life and Subfistence to others, 'twill Challenge Time for to Scar it over, and must needs be very sharp and afflicting, because proper Remedies can't be applied for the eating its Pain and Smart : Such ftrange and Formidable Events, Events clad with all the appearances of a Divine Fury and Vengeance, can't be ascrib'd to the force and energy of Inferiour Beings. but we must conclude with the Royal Pialmist, This is the Lords doing, for it is marvellous in our eyes; which brings me to shew

athly. That fuch Dreadful and Afflicting Judgments do jultly Challenge our Wonder and Admiration; for

1. Is it not a Theme full of Wonder and Amazement, to have the Universe in a shaking Palfy about us; to have our shady Groves and our more useful Houses demolisht by the Rage and Violence of an impetuous Whirlwind? Who can reflect without Aftonishment on those unfortunate Persons. which perished in the Ruins of their own Fabricks? or on the fudden Fate of those greater numbers, who made their Graves in the Sand together? when the Ocean shall be chased beyond its Bounds, and shall Threaten us with a Second Deluge: when we must fly to the Trees for help and safety. while our Flocks and Herds are floating upon the Waves; when the flirill Sounds of Trumpets and Canons shall be but Silent Whispers, if compar'd with the louder Murmurs of a Storm; fuch an Aftonishing Scene may very justly Challenge our Wonder and Admiration; when we shall see and feel fuch things as were beyond our Thoughts and Conception; when such Events shall happen, as shall far exceed the brightest Ideas we could posfibly frame about 'em, this must double our Wonder and Aftonishment: For the Powers of our Minds cannot bear up, but must be all equally confounded with the Terrour and greatness of such a frightful aftonishing Scene. 2. When

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bal When fuch a Terrible Vengeance thall Steal unawares upon us, without giving any Notice of its coming, this must needs add to its Terror and Affrightment; for when we are fensible of approaching Danger, we may feek out for Shelterand Protection, and may comfort our felves, that we may be fecure and lafe in fuch or fuch a place of Retreat; but when we shall ly down in Peace and Security, and be frighted out of our Beds by Dangers more to be feared than Thieves or Robbers sixwhen the place of our Reft fhall become the place of our Burial, and our fafelt Afglume that! prove Dangerous and Fatal to us; when the Mariners feall be furpriz'd in their defired Haven, and throw themselves for Protection on the Merciles and Foaming Waves when the Ocean, which but now was Calm and Still as a Pond final on a fudden be Armed with Wrath and Fury when the shall make no difference, no marks of distinction between a Man of War and the finallest Pinnace. but shall equally Suck them into ther Devouring Womb; when the thall glut her felf with Blood and Spoil and Spew forth her Conquered Vaffals in Triumph on the Neighbouring Shoars ; fuch 2 fudden unexpected Vengeance will Startle us with Surprize and Horrour, and make us crysouth with the Royal Pfatmift, This is the Lords cloing and it is marvellows in opreyer; which leads me to the mas with the Terrour and greatness of fuch a ringhtful

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V. And last Consideration, viz. That fuch a Terrible and Aftonishing Vengeance doth loudly call for our Amendment and Reformation. For when God fends forth his Messengers to scatter the Vials of his Wrath and Fury, 'tis to Rouse and Awaken Mortals, and bring them to Repentance and a better Mind: When the Fatal Pleasures of Sin have thrown the World into the profoundest Lethargy and Sleep, God is found to speak aloud, to expel the malicious influences of fuch Poylonous Opiates; he doth not willingly grieve or afflice Sinners, never Lanceth or Searcheth their Wounds, but when they won't be Cur'd by more gentle and casy Proceedings; and when he cuts off a Joint, or Limb, 'tis to prevent the Corruption of the Nobler parts, and preserve the Body from the Venom and Torment of an incurable Gangrene. When he shakes the Flaming Sword of his Fury at us, is to Alarm and Fright us into our Duty, that we may forfake our Sins and be Sav'd: We have feen the Fierceness of his Anger Graven on the Clouds and Sands; the Winds and the Waves have Proclaimed his Fury and Refentments: And when he speaks in such Furious and Halty Language, we should listen with Reverence and great Attention, for he will not speak to Sinners in Vain; for he is a Wife, a Just and a Powerful, as well as a Gracious and a Merciful Being: If we abuse his Clemency and Indulgence, and those more awakening Providences, by which he strives to reclaim us:

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If the Winds and Storms of his Fury cannot extinguish the Flames and Fire of our Lusts; we have great reason to fear that we shall miserably Perish by some sudden and hasty Vengeance; for if neither his Mercies nor his Judgments can make us wifer and better, his Wisdom and Justice will press him on to destroy us, and how miserable will the Fate of those Sinners be, which have rejected the loudest Calls to Repentance, and out-finn'd the Mercies of the most Compassionate Being ? Could we but frame a just and adequate Notion or Idea of those Trembling Horrours which will be the Sinners Portion, when he meets with his Fatal and Final Ruine: This would Fright us from our Sins, and not fuffer us to be Wicked one moment longer : for who can bear the Sight of an Offended Deity? of a Deity cloathed with an Aftonishing Fory? who carries Terror in his Looks, and whose Eyes Flame with Vengeance. Had we feen the Wonders of the Lord in the Deep, or heard the melting Shricks and Cryes of the numerous Crouds. which perished among the Waves; this would strike Terrour into our Hearts, and make us afraid of injuring fuch a Glorious and fuch a Powerful Being. And if the Sight or Sound of such a Melancholy Scene be fo Terrible and Afflicting. shall we any longer provoke that Sacred Majesty, whose Face is a Consuming Fire? Shall we continue to be Vile and Wicked, when we cannot tell how sudden our Change may be: We may be furprized with Vengeance in the mide of the

the next Sin, as Zimri and Coxbi were, and be fent down Quick into Hell to be Tormented with Damned Furies for ever ; which will be a more Terrible Judgment than to be wrapt up and covered in the Waves and Surges of the Merciless Ocean How will Sinners Fear and Tremble, when they fee and feel fuch Amazing Judgments? They will be fill'd with Trembling Horrors and ftrange Confusion of Thoughts; and will be forc't to Proclaim the Justice and Severity of fuch an Astonishing Providence, in the Language of the Text, This is the Lords doing, and it is marvellous in our

Thus have I passed over the several parts of my Discourse, I shall proceed to make some Remarks on the whole, and so hasten to a Conclusion.

First, Such a Dreadful Surprizing Providence should make us Humble our selves under the Mighty Hand of God, that he may Exalt us in due time; for what are fuch poor, contemptible Creatures as we in comparison of that Glorious and Mighty Being, which can Pull down the World about our Ears, and Blow us into Nothing with the Breath of his Fury ? When God arifeth to shake Terribly the Earth, when he brings Storms and Tempelts out of his Treasures, to grieve and afflict the World, we must not ascribe them to Accident or Chance, but to the Force and Energy of an Omnipotent Power: For, whether those Terrifying Gusts and

and Vapours came from the Caverns of the Earth or were raised by the unusual Motions and Configuration of the Heavens, we are to confider them as the Effects and Consequences of Gods Diffoleafure ; for whatever the Natural Causes of such After nishing Judgments may be, their Stings and Vengeance must come from the Lord: And shall we not Humble our felves before fuch a Glorious and Mighty Being, be Clad with Sack-cloth and Afnes, and ly Prostrate before his Altars, when we fee and feel his Resentments? When Jonah Preached to the Ninevites, Tet Forty days and Ninevel shall be destroyed, there was a general Out-cry in the City. the King and the Beggar were equally Alarm'd, and covered themselves with Sack - cloth and Ashes; and shall not we express some Signs of Humility and Contrition, when God himfelf Preacheth fo powerfully in his Judgments to als ?

Secondly, The Terrible Warnings and Admonitions of Heaven, should make deep and lasting impressions upon our senses: We must think on the Storm though past and gone, and bring our Fears again to Remembrance: Had God spoken unto us by an Audible Voice from the Clouds, we should have fastned it upon our Minds, and with the Israelites Tremble and be afraid; and shall we suffer those amazing Judgments to slip out of our Minds, which carried with them the Signal Expressions of Wrath and Fury? Shall not those Scars, which the

Wound hath left, perpetuate the Remembrance of it, and make us Bow down and Tremble before that Glorious and Mighty Being, which can . Destroy and Ruine us in a Moment? God has no Inclination to Destroy Sinners, but earnestly desires that they would Repent and be Sav'd; and we have Reason to Credit and take his Word, For he is not a Man that he should Lie, or the Son of Man that he should Repent; he is not guided by fuch Humours and Passions as we are. There are no fuch Blemilhes, no fuch Imperfections in the Deity: He is all Love fays St. John; though his Judgments may some-times Rage in the World, yet his Mercy is over all his Works. When God did manifest his Glory unto Elijah, a great and mighty Wind did rend the Mountains, and break in pieces the Rocks before him, after the Wind there passed by an Earthquake, after the Earthquake a Fire, but the Lord did not pass under those Terrible Appearances, but he passed by in a small still Voice; and he does usually appear to the World under such foft and pleasant Representations: He may sometimes fignify his Refentments in Furious and Hasty Language; but he does usually speak to Mortals in the Small Still Voice of Bleffing and Consolation: Plenty and Fullness, and a numerous Train of the most Kind and Propitious Providences, like the Waves of the Sea, fucceed each other: God doth furnish us daily

with a new Succession of his Mercies; but how seldom do his Judgments appear? he hath reserved the Devil and his Angels in Chains of Darkness, till the last and solemn Meeting of the World; and if he happens to let them Loose, or suffers them to Wander to the end of their Chains, to Shake or Disorder Nature, its not often, or for any long continuance, that he does grant them such a Liberty and Indulgence; and when he does, it is to Resorm us, and make us the better.

Thirdly and Lastly, The great Shakings and Convulsions of Nature, should work in us general and thorough Reformation of our Lives and Manners; for God fends his Messengers on this Errand, and Woe be to us if we do not Regard and Obey their Meffage: We may Flatter our felves that the Storm is past and gone, and that we may now Sleep fecurely within our own Apartments; but those are Vain and Idle Delusions; for God has more Judgments, more Terrible Judgments in Store, his Quiver is full of Arrows; and should he arise once more for Vengeance, what a Miserable Fate will attend such Hardned Prefumptuous Sinners, whom neither his Goodness can Lead, nor his Judgements Drive

Drive to Repentance? Twas not our Merit, but his Compassion, which rescu'd us from that Gulph of Ruine, which proved Fatal to fo many others; We are as Fire - Brands pluck'd out of the Burnings, the Redeemed Vaffals of Providence. and shou'd be intirely Devoted to his Worship and Service: When we are Tempted by Secrecy or Retirement, or any other Motive, to be Vile and Wicked, we shou'd confider that we are feen by that Invisible. Eye, which is more to be fear'd than Ten Thousand Worlds: Call to Mind those Convulsions and Trembling Horrours which you languish't under, when your Houses Rocked like Cradles, and were likely to be your Graves. Fancy the World to be in Flames about you, and that you hear the Frightful Groans and Yellings of Damned Sinners, which are beyond Thought, beyond Imagination Killing; this, if any thing, will quench the Fire of your Lusts, and put an end to those Wild Debauches, which, if not timely prevented and cur'd, will make you fit Fewel for those Everlafting Burnings.

God grant the Threatnings and Alarms of Heaven may open our Eyes, that we may fee the things which belong to our Peace; twas:

twas of God's Mercy alone, that we were not all Consum'd by that swift and sudden Destruction, which has Hurried many into their Graves; who were, it may be, more Wise and Vertuous than we are, and might reasonably expect to be as safe and secure as we; there was nothing in us to stay the Destroying Angel; and therefore we must Praise and Magnify God for our Deliverance, that he has been pleased to make us the Living Monuments of his Tenderness and Compassion; and take care by a Wise Improvement of his Mercies, to be ready provided against all surprising unexpected Accidents, when God speaks unto us in the Winds or Weather.

Thus have I touch't at the several points, which I at first intended; what remains, but that we suffer the Word of Exhortation in our passage to the desired Haven; when God speaks in the Winds or the Weather to us; when he pours out the full Vials of his Wrath and Fury on a Wicked World. We should mind those instructive Lessons which his Judgments Declare and Teach; should Reform and Amend our Lives, sling those Vices behind our Backs, which Bar up the ways of Providence, and delay those great Designs, which God seems resolved to accomplish by the Hands

our Gracious Sovereign. Let us do this, and let us do it speedily, with Care and Diligence, Zeal and Fervency, that we may have a fure place of Defence and Shelter, against all the Shakings and Disorders of Nature, and arrive at last in safety to those quiet and blissful Regions, where will be no Gusts of Rapid Vapours to afflict or trouble us, but we shall Rejoice and Triumph to Eternal Ages, and be always entertain'd with fuch pleasant surprizing Scenes, as will even swallow up our Senses with Wonder and Ravishment, and make us break forth into Praises and Adorations, saying, This is also the Lords doing, and is beyond expression marvellow in our eyes, Amen. the said the product of the said of the Marie and the

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